

Sharpening

by Patch Blakey

The writer of Proverbs said, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17).

I’ve watched as I’ve sharpened a pencil in my garage. As I turn the handle on the sharpener, layer after layer of wood is shaved off and the pencil grows noticeably shorter, but it also grows sharper. Once it is sharpened, it is much easier to use; it is more effective. If I were a pencil, I can only imagine it being an excruciating process. Thankfully, it’s not that way for us as people, but it can still often be painful, challenging, and difficult to be “sharpened” by another.

I also have visions of ancient Greeks preparing for war, and grinding their blades to a sharpened edge with a whetting stone, or as the verse above states, with another piece of iron. Once the sharpening has been completed, the sword will be a much more useful and effective implement for the warrior in battle. Again, I can envision myself being ground down on a rapidly spinning grinding stone to be “sharpened,” and the thought is too painful to bear for the instant it crosses my

mind. But, the experience of being “sharpened” by another person is still often a discomfiting prospect.

Yet the writer of Proverbs speaks of this sharpening process occurring between friends. It is a collegial exchange with mutual respect and regard in mind. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:7). Jesus did this for His disciples then and for those ever since. We can conclude that there is a selflessness to sharpening others and also to being sharpened. In other words, it’s not about us. We sharpen others and we are sharpened when we focus on the benefit and service to others as a result of that sharpening.

Jesus also told his disciples, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). Friends do not keep beneficial information from one another — they share it freely. These friends want their friends to be included in what is happening, not

excluded. And this is consistent with what the Apostle John wrote, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

So, given all of the above, I hope you find the articles in this issue of *Classis* to be presented in the context of friends serving friends within a community of schools. I doubt that any will feel any sharp physical pains as they read the array of articles herein published. But my hope is that that you will be stimulated by your peers from other schools and encouraged perhaps in ways not previously considered. In addition, I am pleased to note that we have included selected excerpts from George Grant’s popular ACCS conference talk, “Dumb and Dumber: The Desperate Need for Covenantal and Classical Education.” Perhaps, as a result of considering these comments from others, you will find yourself a more effective classical Christian educator.

Patch Blakey is the ACCS executive director.